



MSHA's Occupational Illness and Injury  
Prevention Program  
Health Idea

**SAFETY  
IS A  
VALUE!**

**“Birds and Bats”**

Category : All Mines

Mine Type: Hygiene and Housekeeping

Respiratory diseases such as histoplasmosis, psittacosis and cryptococcosis can be transmitted by excretions of birds, fowl or bats. These diseases are transmitted either by inhaling the dust from feathers or dropping or inhaling contaminated soil.

Miners could become contaminated through infected soils in mines and droppings on the floor or rafters of mining structures. Symptoms appear within 3-17 days of exposure. In most cases, the symptoms are mild and flu-like. Fever, chills, headache, fatigue, cough, breathing difficulty, chest tightness, enlarged lymph nodes, lung inflammation and pneumonia can occur. Death is rare.

Prevent the spread of infection by cleaning up the infected area:

- Barricade the infected area; warn others who may travel in the area;
- Minimize ventilation to the area to avoid disturbing dust or feathers;
- Wear a particulate respirator equal to N-95 or better;
- Wear disposable gloves and eye protection;
- Avoid dry scraping or sweeping of dried bird/bat manure or bird feathers;
- Spray infected material with disinfectant and let it set 5 minutes before disturbing;
- removing feces, feathers, bird carcasses etc. with a shovel or dust pan;
- Disinfect with 70% isopropyl alcohol; 1% lysol, or a dilution of household bleach; **Caution:** use formalin (a carcinogen) for histoplasma;
- Discard all materials, that cannot be adequately disinfected, in a biohazard bag;
- Spray the floor with disinfectant and mop it up; dispose of the mop head in a biohazard bag; and
- Disinfect the dustpan.

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**Remember – Safety is a Value that you can LIVE with!**